

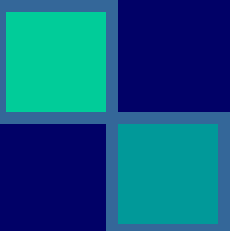

Finding one's way in the profession



Francis Su
(Harvey Mudd College)

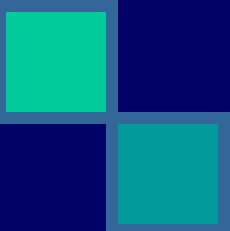



Where is God leading me?

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- Life in the academy is not easy
 - Faced with choices
 - How to make decisions regarding our calling to science and the academy?
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Discerning My Calling


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- Grad school: **should I quit?**
 - Job: **which job should I take?**
 - Modeling Christ: **how?**
 - Engaging the university: **before tenure?**
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Know your priorities:

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- Quote from a new faculty member:

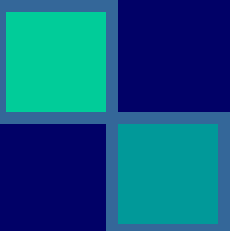
“The number one downside to faculty existence is the fact that you have to juggle so much that you always must drop something, some plates are just going to break. The job is simply not humanly possible.”



“Successful faculty learn what’s best to drop: class preparation, research, funding, professional development, marriage, whatever...”




Know your priorities:



“Without a clear purpose you have no foundation on which you base decisions, allocate your time, and use your resources.

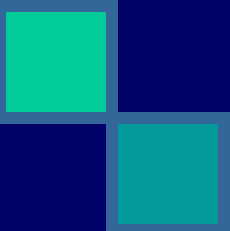

“You will tend to make choices based on circumstances, pressures, and your mood at the moment. People who don’t know their purpose try to do too much--- and that causes stress, fatigue, and conflict.”



--- Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life*



Academy vs Kingdom Values

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- Accomplishments vs Worth
 - Knowledge vs Wisdom
 - Strength vs Weakness
 - Dichotomy vs Wholeness
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Kingdom values help us discern our calling



Example: a Crisis of Calling

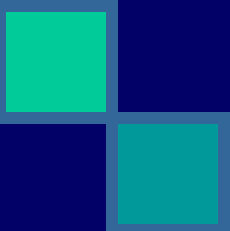

- Questions flood:
 - Why am I in graduate school?
 - Shouldn't I be doing something more fruitful?
 - Does what I'm studying really matter to God, or God's purposes? (Math: shouldn't it matter?)
 - Should I stay in academia?
- Happens to almost every grad student
 - Why:
 - No benchmarks for progress
 - Self-worth calibrated by accomplishments

Grad student = earnest student + toil + narrow focus
+ neglect + abuse + low self esteem





Accomplishments vs Worth

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- Academy: you are defined by your accomplishments
 - Kingdom: God values you for who you are, apart from what you accomplish
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Accomplishment-driven thinking:

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- Need for Deed-based Approval / Recognition
Attractive, but it is a trap
 - Academic Materialism
More papers, more grants, longer resume, more citations, more intellectual capital
 - Competition
 - Leads to loss of passion for subject itself
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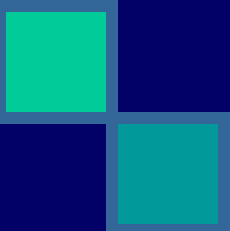


Worth-driven thinking:

- God has created me
 - so I have intrinsic worth apart from accomplishments
 - God has created the natural world
 - so it has intrinsic worth apart from applications
 - God is revealed through both Scripture and nature (Romans 1:20)
 - so science and teaching, like theology and missions, is a sacred calling
 - God desires that I find satisfaction in my vocation (Eccl. 2:24-26)
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Ecclesiastes 2:24-26 (NRSV):



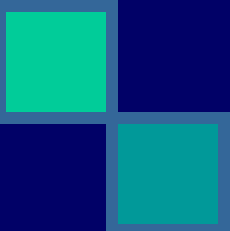

“There is nothing better for mortals than to eat and drink, and find enjoyment in their toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God; for apart from him who can eat or who can have enjoyment?

“For to the one who pleases him God gives wisdom and knowledge and joy; but to the sinner he gives the work of gathering and heaping, only to give to one who pleases God.”



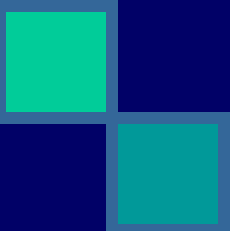



Q. Should I quit grad school?

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- Can I do math for the right reasons?
 - I love math
 - I realized that if I didn't do math, I would miss it!
 - God loves math too
 - I also love teaching!
 - Can I rest in God's valuation of me?
 - Or at least find people who will affirm my true worth?
 - Don't quit.
 - Just switch advisors.
 - The answer may be different for you, but the principle is the same
 - where does worth-driven thinking lead you?
- 



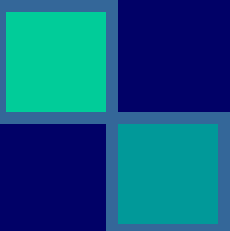
Knowledge vs Wisdom

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- Academy: science to serve man's glory and purposes
 - Kingdom: science to serve God's glory and purposes

 - One yields knowledge; the other wisdom
(science done under the fear of the Lord)
 - Ambition vs aesthetic
 - Technology vs stewardship
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Science for God's sake


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- Both ways science done may look same!
 - But motivation affects how we *live*:
 - Pursue excellence, but for God's purposes
 - Quality, not quantity of research
 - Ethical considerations



Ground in our understanding that creation was made for God's purposes!

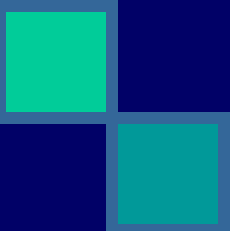



Q. Which job to take?

- Prestigious post-doc vs dream job at HMC
 - Research vs a Balance
 - Advice from others:
 - “you’ll be killing your research career if you don’t take the post-doc”
 - Wisdom: what are *God’s* purposes for me?
 - The answer might be different for you
- 




Strength vs Weakness

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- Academy: discourages any display of weakness
 - Kingdom: God is manifest in our weakness
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Q. How to model Christ?

- Shouldn't I "have it all together"?
 - With the stresses of graduate school
 - With my parents' terminal illnesses
 - Getting "real":
 - I'll choose to show weakness
 - This decision not always beneficial
 - Others opened up to me
 - You are caring for others by showing your weakness
 - I was free to receive, as well as give
- 




Dichotomy vs Wholeness

- Academy: discourages any association with spirituality
especially in science?
 - Kingdom: the whole person is physical and spiritual
the complete person must be nurtured
- 




Wholeness

- Nurtured emotionally
Example: my student whose father was dying
 - Nurtured intellectually
Example: curricula lacks any connection
between the spiritual and the scientific
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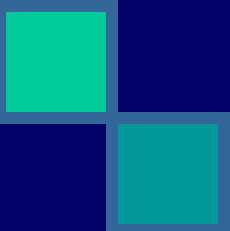



Example: Reading Group

- Find a relevant book:
Science and Theology, by John Polkinghorne
 - Invite Christians and non-Christians
Christian Scholars Foundation bought their books!
 - Meet for 8 weeks on Saturday morning
with pastries!
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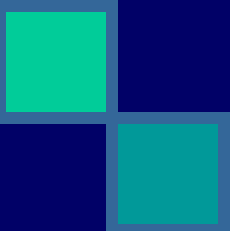


Q. Hmmn...?

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- What would my chair and dean think?
 - Would this action free me to pursue the wholeness of my students?
 - Surprise: dean and chair supported it
For “connecting with students outside class responsibilities”
- 



Advice:

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- Identify your own issues and the Kingdom values most relevant
 - Worth
 - Wisdom
 - Weakness
 - Wholeness
 - Decisions are still not easy, but...
 - Kingdom values will **free** you to discern God's calling
- 